



319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Generating high-quality maintainers on, off-duty



Photo by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

Airman 1st Class C.J. Miller, guidance and control specialist for the 319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron here, checks the auto pilot controls on a KC-135R Stratotanker.

By Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke
319th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. – A staggering 25 percent of the base enlisted populace here are a part of the 319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

In a squadron comprised predominantly of senior airmen and below, training is important and taken very seriously.

It has to be, said Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Vital, 319th AMXS first sergeant, because without the 319th AMXS, none of the wing's KC-135R Stratotankers would get off the ground.

Maintenance troops straight out of technical training do not immediately start putting their skills and knowledge to work. Instead they are required to go through an intense training program, which is divided into two phases.

Phase one focuses on learning the basics of the jet, like powering up the jet and marshaling the jet. In those classes, all maintainers learn together – from crew chiefs to jet engine specialists.

Phase two goes directly into job-specific training and specialties are grouped together.

“Phase two had a lot of hands-on training,” said Airman 1st Class C. J. Miller, a KC-135 guidance and control specialist. “Thanks to it, I was pretty comfortable with the job when I got out of training.”

Despite the opportunities afforded by formal training, sometimes the best learning is on the job.

Airman Megan Vanheuklom, a crew chief, had a short break between phases and found herself out on the flight-line practicing the basics.

“We started working on the fundamentals, like wing walking and marshaling,” said Airman Vanheuklom.

“The more you can get qualified, the better,” she said.

“Once out of training maintainers aren't completely free to work on the jets by themselves,” said Senior Master Sgt. Rick Pasamante, 319th AMXS maintenance trainer. “They still must be checked off on the myriad of tasks that belong to each specialty.”

The enormity of these maintainers' jobs does at times sneak up on them.

“It was scary the first time I did a job by myself,” said Airman Miller.

“It was like game time, practice was over and it was

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finally for real,” he said.

However, training never really ends in 319th AMXS.

“At any given time, more than 70 percent of the 580 assigned to the unit are in some form of training,” Sergeant Vital said.

“The training can be anything from professional military development, to upgrade training, learning new weapons systems and or modifications on the KC-135,” he said.

“We aren’t expected to know everything, but we are expected to learn as fast as we can,” Airman Vanheuklom said.

“It gets easier over time,” Airman Miller said. “I still get a little nervous when working on rush jobs or doing a new procedure, but if I ever have a question someone is always there to point me in the right direction.”

On the flightline, helping each other and doing the job safely is one of the squadron’s fundamentals.

“Safety is drilled into us a lot,” Airman Vanheuklom said. “We try to take every measure to avoid hurting ourselves or others.”

Shouldering a big load

Many of the Airmen working in 319th AMXS don’t typically think about the underlying responsibility that rests on their shoulders every day – they just go out to fix jets.

“The magnitude of my job doesn’t even hit me until I talk to someone who doesn’t do it,” Airman Miller said. “They seem amazed that I work on the aircraft, and that one wrong move could result in the loss of life or large amounts of money lost due to damage.”

Airman Vanheuklom said, “We don’t dwell on that aspect. We strive to do our best at everything so that factor never comes up.”

319th AMXS also averages about 25 percent of the squadron deployed at all times. In fact, the unit led Air Mobility Command as the “most deployed” aircraft maintenance squadrons all over AMC in fiscal 2004.

“Typically, the young Airmen are doing two to three 60-day rotations a year, and have been for the past three years,” said Maj. Craig Gaddis, 319th AMXS commander.

Combating the stress

Maintaining the aircraft can be a stressful job said Airman Miller. However, Airmen, with the help of squadron leadership have found ways to offset that stress.

“AMXS encourages its Airmen to continue excelling off the flightline as well as on,” Sergeant Vital said.

Barnes Hall, 319th AMXS’ dorm, boasts three day rooms, six laundry rooms and nearly 130 dorm occupants.

“I’m very comfortable in my dorm,” Airman Vanheuklom said. “It’s nice to just come to the dorm and relax with my friends.”

Although Airman Vanheuklom said she likes to

relax, she, like many in her squadron, also enjoy participating in intramural sports.

In fact, members of the 319th AMXS recently beat the 319th Security Forces Squadron in intramural flag-football for the championship.

Sergeant Vital said sports and fitness go a long way and to promoting esprit de corps.

“We just have to do it on a larger scale,” he said. While doing a squadron formation run, 319th AMXS had to take two blocks to complete a turn.

The squadron excels in intramural sports and is also encouraged and supported in furthering their education.

“When I wanted to take classes, my supervisor didn’t have any objections to me attending,” Airman Miller said.

“He made sure I was progressing in my upgrade training and that I was on the right track job wise and then gave me the permission,” he said.

“We push these young maintainers every day to meet their training requirements, keep up with a high operations tempo, and execute the every day mission – even if that means standing on the flightline in 50-



Photo by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

Airman Megan Vanheuklom, KC-135R Stratotanker crew chief, inventories her tools before taking them out on the flightline. All tools must be accounted for before turning them in. One tool left in the wrong place could result in the loss of life or the loss of money due to aircraft damage.

below weather to get an aircraft launched,” Sergeant Vital said. “And through all of that, they are still able to go out and excel in their off-duty time.

“I commend them for doing just that,” Sergeant Vital said.



Photos by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

Airman 1st Class Matthew Sons, a KC-135 communication and navigational specialist with 319th AMXS, and Sarah Saulsbury, help paint the walls of the Warrior Airmen Recreation Center here recently.

Officers selected for internship, cross training

By Airman 1st Class James Croxon
319th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. – A few years ago, three young second lieutenants began what would become exemplary careers in the Air Force. In October, their efforts were rewarded by Headquarters Air Mobility Command with their selection for its premier development programs for company grade officers — Phoenix HAWK and Phoenix REACH.

Officers selected for the programs represent this base's major command's best and brightest, according to Maj. Theodore G. Weibel, AMC Chief of Executive Development Programs.

Capt. Jeffrey D. Johns, 319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Viking Flight commander here, began his career as a jet engine mechanic on C-141 Starlifters.

Building on a strong enlisted foundation, he took the next step and earned his commission.

After commissioning, then 2nd Lt. Johns went back to the flightline and the teamwork that had originally enamored him to the maintenance career field. His love of the job helped make him one of 13 officers selected for the Phoenix HAWK program.

The HAWK program takes the top one percent of captains in AMC and gives them career broadening through a two-year assignment.

The first half of the assignment is spent in the Tanker Airlift Control Center at Scott Air AFB, Ill., the second year is spent at AMC headquarters sharpening their staff skills.

When asked about his selection, an almost embarrassed Captain Johns, quickly gave credit to his subordinates for their hard work and support.

"I feel humble to be considered for the program," Captain Johns said. "It's the (Airmen) out on the flight line in below-zero weather, deicing a KC-135, that make me look good."



Courtesy photo

Capt. Charles D. Cooley, 906th ARS, sits in the cockpit of a KC-135. He is one of 13 selectees for AMC's Phoenix HAWK program.

He credits his leadership, the 319th Maintenance Group commander and 319th AMXS commander, with mentoring him and taking an interest in his career.

"It was Col. Saville and Maj. Gaddis who told me about the HAWK program," he said. "They took an interest in me and put my package together."

For Capt. Charles D. Cooley, 906th Air Refueling Squadron, selection for the HAWK program involves more than the initial assignment. As a pilot, Captain Cooley will automatically be qualified for crossflow into an AMC airlift aircraft, a C-130, C-17, or C-5.

He was commissioned from West Virginia University as a "blue chip" officer, meaning he was in the top 15 percent of new officers for military and academic achievement.

Upon graduation from Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laughlin AFB, Texas, he came here and began winning awards.

When asked about his selection, Captain Cooley said, "It is an honor to be accepted for this program because it marks a major milestone for (my family and me) and our life in the Air Force."

Family is important to Captain Cooley. "A supportive family has always been and will always be the key to (my) success."

Upon graduation from the Air Force Academy, then 2nd Lt. Evert began his career at UPT. His first duty station as a newly-graduated pilot was Grand Forks. While here he worked his way to the co-pilot and aircraft commander ranks and spent one year as the chief of wing scheduling, eventually reaching the level of instructor pilot in the fall of 2003.

His selection for Phoenix REACH allowed Captain Evert to take the next step in an already distinguished career.

"As an officer and aviator, Phoenix REACH provides me with a tremendous career broadening opportunity," said Captain Evert. "REACH essentially takes me out of one cockpit and immediately places me into another. In this case I will be flying a C-5 Galaxy out of Travis AFB, Calif."

Like his peers, Captain Evert is excited and grateful for his selection. "It is an honor to be selected for the REACH program. I am excited by the opportunity to take the lessons learned from my unique tanker experiences here and use them in the next chapter of my Air Force career," he said.

According to Major Weibel, this is the first year that intra-crossflow is allowed, which allows pilots to cross from tanker to



Photo by Airman 1st Class James Croxon

Capt. Jeffrey D. Johns, 319th AMXS, stands with the Viking Hammer truck used for aircraft maintenance. He was recently selected for the AMC Phoenix HAWK.

tanker or airlift to airlift. Thirty-one percent of the 29 REACH selectees this year will participate in intra-crossflow.

Both the HAWK and REACH programs are aimed toward career broadening. According to a Headquarters AMC fact sheet, the 109 past graduates of the program have a 100 percent promotion rate to major, seven have been promoted to lieutenant colonel below the zone. There are also four graduates sitting as squadron commanders. "The programs don't train outstanding officers," said Major Weibel. "It recognizes the top officers and enriches them through career broadening."



Courtesy photo

Capt. Robert E. Evert, 911th ARS, crouches in the cockpit of a C-5. He will crossflow to the aircraft through AMC's Phoenix REACH program.

VETERAN: As an acronym, what would it mean to you?

By Staff Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol
319th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

As a military man, for nearly 13 years my life has been filled with acronyms. Sometimes, it's like speaking another language.

Our military veterans have also lived that life and because of that I had a thought. What would happen if we made a new acronym – VETERAN?

This is what it means to me.

V – Victory. I use this word not only because of the many victories our veterans have achieved in defense of our freedom, but also the victories military families and the American people have won together to make this country strong. Victory at home is as important as victory on the battlefield.

E – Encouragement. American veterans have been an inspiration to me my entire life. To this day, whether I'm out in the community or back in my home-

town, the veterans I come across inspire me to do better because of the sacrifices they made for the way of life I enjoy today. As a veteran myself, the encouragement I get from my own family also helps me to do better and makes me proud of the work I do as an Airman every day.

T – Tough. I always find a sense of toughness in all veterans no matter what conflict, service, or time they served. Whether it was in the trenches of World War I, or braving powerful sandstorms in the deserts of Southwest Asia during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, I know our veterans have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly and persevered. That takes toughness few can muster.

Being tough is also something loved ones left behind do each day. The work of the homefront force is often underestimated. Military family members who have faced this have certainly earned

my salute.

E – Educate. Military veterans, from yesterday and today, are among our best educators and community volunteers. For many vets, the service to their country doesn't end when they leave the military. It's a lifelong commitment to not only share their experiences, but to make America stronger.

R – Resolve. I don't doubt that each and every veteran has strived to be the best in all they do. The "R" in the acronym can also mean "remembrance." Military veterans know it's important to never forget the sacrifices that have been made to protect this country.

A – Appreciate. There is no uncertainty in my mind that military veterans are appreciated in America. For example, when I was traveling in uniform for a stateside temporary duty assignment earlier this year, I had several people thank me for my service.

I've heard the same sentiment nearly

everywhere I go. Whether in the city of Grand Forks, or somewhere else in this great nation, I've heard and seen the appreciation the American people have for their military members.

N – Never. I say never because we should never forget our veterans who have served and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

We should never forget the families who have sacrificed and given much of themselves to support military members who have deployed to fight the wars of past and present.

We, as Americans, should never relent in defending our freedom and our way of life. Through our veterans, we've been able to do just that.

On Veterans Day and every other day of the year, come up with your own meaning for this acronym.

It's another way we can honor all those who gave us the one thing we cherish the most – our freedom.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

Welcome, warrior style

Col. Lee DeRemer, 319th Operations Group commander here, spoke on how the 319th Logistics Readiness Squadron supports his group during the Daedalian Logistics Effectiveness Award evaluation team visit in November. 319th LRS members transformed a warehouse into a combat environment showcasing their combat logistics capabilities.



Photo by Capt. Michael Meridith

A charitable bid

Col. Robert Quinn bids during the fourth annual Mercantile Auction, sponsored by the Officer's Spouses' Club and held at the Northern Lights Club Nov. 19. The money raised goes toward college scholarships for local families.



Staff sergeants Michael Christiansen, left, and Fred Quick, right, 319th Security Forces Squadron, show Twining Elementary School fourth-graders the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, M9 Beretta, M4 Carbine and the M16 rifle.

A taste of deployment

The first base Family Member Deployment Line mimicked that of an actual deployment line. The make-shift deployment line processed 196 Twining Elementary School fourth-sixth graders at Liberty Square Nov. 19.



A fourth-grader dons a Kevlar helmet and flak vest while processing through the deployment line.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Monte Volk

Brittany Rau and Clint Dallas, Twining Elementary School fifth-graders, listen to the personnel briefing before proceeding through the deployment line. Each of the students who processed received a dog tag with the words "Proud to be a military kid, Family Member Deployment line November 2004" stamped on it. They also received a certificate thanking them and stating "You're the best!"



Photo by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

PARTING SHOT

Guard members wrap duty at Grand Forks Air Force Base

Sixteen members of the North Dakota Army 141st Engineer Combat Battalion board one of the wing's KC-135 Stratotankers for an incentive flight. The Army Guard members ended their two-year tenure here Nov. 19 when they officially stood down.